

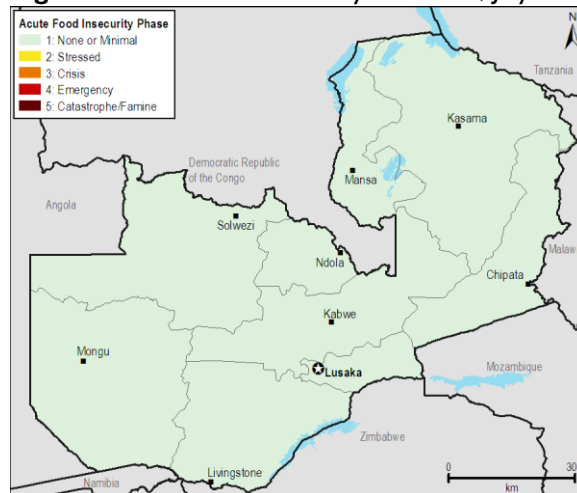
## ZAMBIA Food Security Outlook

July through December 2012

### Key Messages

- Food security conditions remain favorable after Zambia attained another good harvest for the fourth consecutive year. Household food supply and variety have increased in rural areas and local markets remain well supplied. Maize prices are below average and declining, making this staple food more accessible to poorer market-dependent households. Overall, there is increased food access for most rural households.
- From July to December, minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity conditions are expected in areas that experienced a reduced harvest due to erratic rainfall during the 2011/12 agricultural season. Poorer households in the areas of concern will start to supplement their harvest with market purchases by August.
- Due to the chronic vulnerability and susceptibility of some poorer households to shocks on their livelihoods, there will be some households that are unable to meet their basic food needs without assistance from July to December 2012. For these households the Zambia Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZVAC) has recommended the use of cash/vouchers for local purchase in order to enable them to have access to adequate food without any disruptions to the grain market. From July to December external food assistance will not be required.

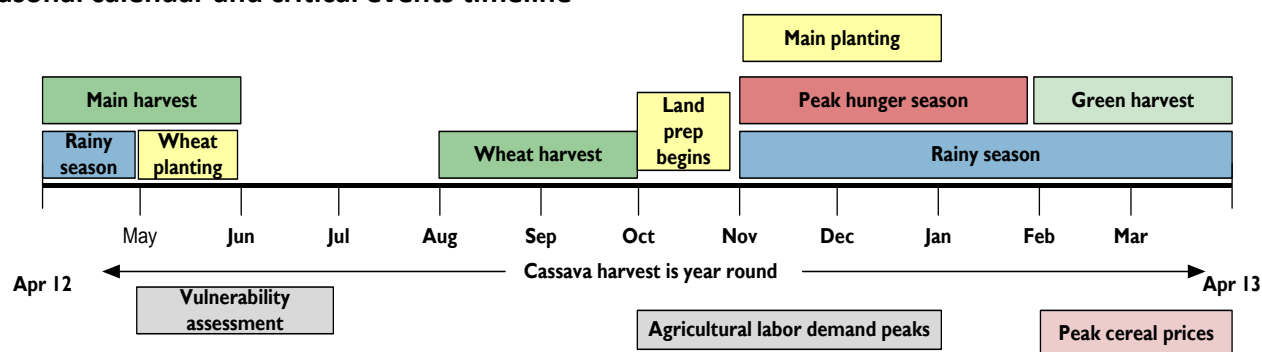
**Figure 1. Current food security outcomes, July 2012**



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: [www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale](http://www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale)

### Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET

## Most likely food security scenario, July through December 2012

### National overview and current food security conditions

Following another good harvest, the food security situation in the country has generally remained favorable. This is the fourth successive year of surplus cereal production. The new harvest has increased both the supply and variety of household foods in rural areas. Food access has improved for most rural households during this time of the year because most rural households in low and high producing areas are currently consuming food from their own production. Current prices of staple foods are low and declining according to seasonal trends (see **Figure 4**). These low food prices are increasing staple food access for poor market-dependent households. As a result, most households are currently experiencing only Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity and are able to meet their basic food needs. Typically June to August marks the period with the highest supply of staple and seasonal foods at the household level.

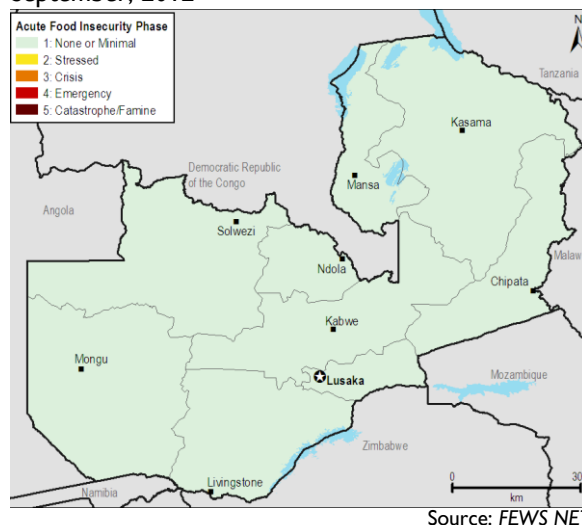
The Food Reserve Agency (FRA) is still selling maize on the market from the previous marketing season stocks. However, the good quality grain stocks with FRA have substantially reduced. The new maize harvest from small scale farmers has started reaching the market. Despite the large harvest this season, the FRA delayed the commencement of the maize purchase program. The agency attributed the program delay to high moisture content in the maize which could cause the quality of the maize to deteriorate while in storage. Therefore, they opted to wait for the maize to reach the recommended moisture content level of 12.5 percent. This purchase program is an FRA annual activity to secure grain for national strategic grain reserves as well as provide an alternative market for small scale farmers in rural areas. This delay has given the small scale traders an opportunity to purchase the maize at lower prices before the FRA, who are offering above market price, move into the market. As is typical in a surplus year, maize is flowing to the Lusaka urban markets from both within and outside Lusaka Province especially the Central, Eastern and Southern Provinces. Traders at the Lusaka local markets are currently buying maize at K40, 000 per 50Kg (K800 per Kg) from producers.

### Current food security situation in the areas of focus

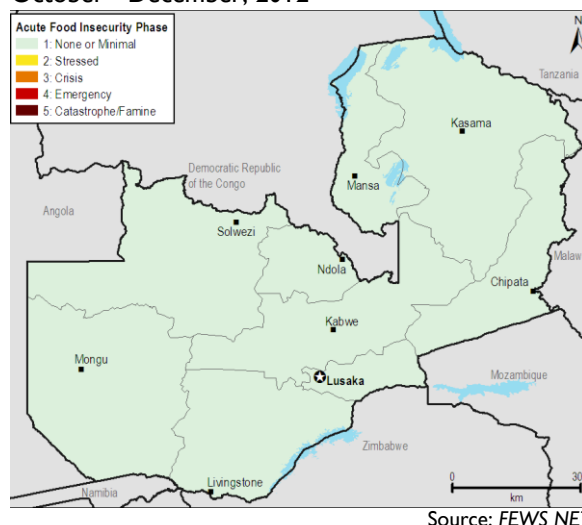
The districts of Mazabuka, Chikankata, Gwembe, Mambwe, and Chavuma are areas of concern from July to December. The food security situation in these districts is currently stable following the recent harvest. Staple food prices in these districts are steady and declining while markets are adequately supplied. Since most households in these districts rely on their own production, the previous surplus years and recent normal harvests have ensured that most households have immediate access to basic foods. This is also true for the localized areas which had reduced harvest due to the impact of prolonged dry spells during the 2011/12 agricultural season. However, in these areas food stocks are lower than the norm for this time of the year and will run out earlier than usual.

The recent annual vulnerability assessment results spearheaded by the Zambia Vulnerability Committee (ZVAC) showed no strong evidence of households engaging in unusual livelihood strategies, such as pulling children out of school and

**Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, July-September, 2012**



**Figure 3. Most likely food security outcomes, October - December, 2012**



For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: [www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale](http://www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale)

increased sale of assets, while the acute malnutrition levels are mostly within acceptable levels in the assessed districts. Furthermore, the ZVAC results showed that the majority (80 percent) of households in the assessed districts have good food consumption scores despite most of them being asset poor. This could be the result of increased seasonal food variety which has provided increased diet diversity following the new harvest. The fact that the household practice of pre-harvesting maize was absent or insignificant in the areas of concern signifies that the households were not experiencing significant food shortages shortly before and during the main harvest. Generally, at least 80 percent of households in areas of concern are currently able to obtain basic foods. The districts in this assessment can best be classified as facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity.

### Most likely scenario, July through December 2012

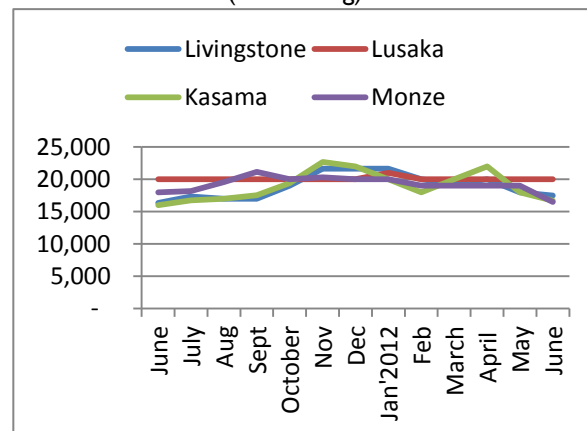
The markets within the districts of concern will be well supplied from July to December and therefore staple food prices are likely to continue to remain below the five-year average. Since poorer households in these areas will have lower food reserves they will need to depend on the market earlier than usual. As long as the markets remain well supplied and prices remain low, acute food insecurity conditions for most households will continue to be Minimal (IPC Phase 1).

Between July and December, the Food Reserve Agency is expected to stop selling maize on the market once most of the good quality maize in their storage is sold and they have relatively low stocks of good quality maize. Most millers have maize stocks on hand and therefore they will continue to adequately supply maize meal on the market. The millers and traders will be buying maize from the small scale traders in order to replenish their stocks. The millers and traders will also provide the much needed market for producers before the FRA maize purchase program commences at the end of July. Small scale traders will continue buying maize from small scale farmers and supplying local markets. This will ensure that average to below average staple food prices continue in the midst of the large harvest. The FRA has planned to purchase 500,000 MT of maize from small scale farmers from July to October for the national strategic reserves. The Agency will be buying maize at an above market fixed price of K65, 000 per 50Kg for the third consecutive year. FRA purchases at above market prices are not expected to increase the market price since most producers will be forced to sell below the FRA price once will become desperate to move their maize due to limited storage and the immediate need for cash.

Typically the **July to September** period is characterized by large to moderate household food stocks, both in terms of quantity and variety. The better off and middle wealth groups will rely on their own harvest throughout this period. Even the poorer households in the areas of concern tend to depend mostly on their own harvest up until August/September. The foods consumed include maize, legumes (groundnuts/cowpeas/beans) and a variety of vegetables. Sweet potatoes and pumpkins are also available at the household level up until August in areas with a normal harvest. Therefore once their own food stocks run-out, households become increasingly dependent on the market and working for food. Typically, poor households engage in off-season activities including fishing, petty trade, beer brewing and casual labor. In addition to off-farm employment, households in Mazabuka, Chikankata and Gwembe districts also engage in casual labor on commercial farms and the nearby sugar plantation.

Despite the reduced harvest, the better off will still depend on their own harvest during the July to September period as it will be adequate to sustain them. The poorer households will be engaged in various income generating activities which are typical during the off season period of July to September, but will need to be enhanced in order to adequately meet basic food needs. These will range from casual work, sale of fish as well as gardening and beer brewing. The source of staple food will be the local market from July to September and food payment from labor sale. For the typically high producing districts (Mazabuka and Chikankata) surplus food will be available within these areas. Market-dependent households will benefit from the good grain supply at average to below average prices from July to December. As long as the staple food prices remain relatively low, most households should be able to manage, but poorer ones will need to cut back on non-essential

**Figure 4.** Comparative nominal retail maize prices in selected districts (ZMK/18Kg)



Source: Central Statistics Office (CSO) and FEWS NET

commodities. In the case of the remaining typically low producing districts of Mambwe, Gwembe and Chavuma, affected poorer households are expected to deplete their own harvest a little earlier than usual (by at least one month). The better off households will be able to adequately manage as they will have more food stocks and have some assets. For the poorer households whose harvest normally lasts for only 4-5 months, it implies that they will be depending on the market by early August. Similarly, these households will meet their basic food needs by increasing non-agricultural labor sales and increasing the consumption of less preferred grains (sorghum/millet) and wild foods. Fishing activities are an important livelihood up until November for poorer households in these areas and will be increased. For Gwembe, migration to neighboring districts in search of casual work is also a likely strategy. Individuals will also engage in casual work in lodges and sell of crafts (in Mambwe).

From **October to December**, the better off households will rely mostly on their own harvest, but will eventually supplement this with market purchases when the lean season starts in November. Despite reduced harvest in parts of these districts, the better off group will still have some food stocks to rely on from July - December. This is especially true for the high producing districts of Mazabuka and Chikankata districts. In the case of the lower producing districts of Chavuma and Gwembe, the better off will be supplementing their food stocks with increased market purchases during this period through income raised by livestock and livestock product sales. Increased vegetable and honey production and sale will help households meet food needs in Mambwe district. Poorer households in the areas of focus will depend entirely on food earned from labor sales and the market. As land preparation starts in October, there will be increased labor opportunities on farms owned by the better off wealth group. Demand for labor will be high during the October to December period due to land preparation, planting and weeding. These labor opportunities will provide the poorer households with much needed food and income. Since staple food supply on the market is expected to remain good even during the lean period, prices are not expected to rise above average, making the food in local markets more accessible. However, in all of the areas of concern the poorer households will still need to employ alternative livelihood strategies in order to meet their basic food needs as the lean period starts in November and staple food prices seasonally increase. Some of these strategies may include consumption of less preferred foods, cutting back on non-essential commodities and temporarily migrating to other districts in search of work on large farms.

For some poorer households that face chronic vulnerability and susceptibility to shocks on their livelihoods, food assistance may be necessary in order to meet their basic food needs. For these households, the ZVAC has recommended the use of cash or vouchers in order to enable them have access to adequate food, while at the same time avoiding disruption of the grain market. For poor households that face chronic vulnerability to food insecurity, there will be adequate food supplies in-country and therefore external food assistance will not be required. The food security situation will remain mostly stable from July to December 2012 with only minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity in the five districts of concern.

**Table I.** Less likely events over the next six months that could change the above scenario

| Area  | Event  | Impact on food security outcomes  |
|---|--|---|
| Gwembe, Chavuma, Mambwe, Mazabuka, Chikankata | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maize shortage in these districts could increase the staple food prices.</li> <li>- An outbreak of cattle disease could reduce income from cattle sales for better off households.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will result in poorer households not being able to access food in local markets even after they have stretched their livelihood strategies. An increased number of poorer households would then depend on the government for assistance in order to meet their basic food needs.</li> <li>• This could adversely affect the better off household's ability to employ poorer households during the land preparation and planting period, making the poorer households more vulnerable to food insecurity.</li> </ul> |